

Connecticut Communist Party USA

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

Testimony, Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Supporting SB 354

Joelle Fishman, Connecticut Communist Party USA

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Joelle Fishman. I live in New Haven and am speaking on behalf of the Connecticut Communist Party.

I would like to begin by appreciating your inclusion of a just transition of our state's economy to one that is environmentally sustainable in the Green New Deal bill.

The outstanding young people in the forefront of demanding action on climate change realize that if nothing is done now they may well not have a future, they may not be able to grow up and thrive. This climate crisis affects us all as parents and grandparents, as workers and community members, as living beings on this planet. We fail to act at our own peril.

The needs and concerns of workers in fossil fuel industries and front line communities must be front and center for solutions to the climate crisis to be fully embraced and successfully move forward. In this regard, Sections 6 through 9 of the Green New Deal bill are of paramount importance, in particular the formation of an Office of Just Transition in the Department of Labor and the Environmental Equity Working Group.

Workforce development, retraining and apprenticeship programs for clean energy jobs must be firmly connected to guaranteed employment at the end of the line. We can learn from the shortcomings of the Trade Adjustment Act which provided training to workers when their jobs went overseas, but left many families devastated when there were no jobs at the end of the line.

I am thinking of one skilled machinist, also a veteran, who got certified in HVAC after the factory where he worked moved to Belgium. He never found employment and eventually ended up homeless with his wife for a year. Transitioning our economy today can and must be different.

Accountability and oversight of the jobs pipeline and environmental justice goals, along with oversight of carbon emission goals, are a critical component of the Green New Deal.

The climate crisis requires that priorities be reordered. For the Green New Deal to succeed, investments in clean energy resources must be centered on low-income communities and communities of color that have always felt the brunt of greedy corporations' waste and pollution. The stipulations of specific goals for spending investments in clean energy efficiency, energy assistance, transportation and economic development in environmental justice communities are an essential aspect of the bill.

An additional comment. Our state's economy has long been dependent on volatile military production jobs. The Green New Deal outlook of transforming our economy to one that is sustainable and equitable provides a singular opportunity to evaluate, plan and overcome dependency on military spending for jobs. The Office of Just Transition's scope should include military production workers, who will be inevitably displaced as more of the federal budget shifts to the fight on climate change. We can become a state whose economy is dependent on clean energy, with equitable inclusion of all communities.

I urge a favorable vote and adoption of SB 354 for a Green New Deal.